

was both cheated of his pound of flesh, and the principal in money, is perhaps rather ingenious, but it is immensely clever. Would a strict administration of justice have contemplated the pound of flesh *without the blood*? Shakspeare's genius triumphs over these little points, or what would be inconsistencies in stricter drama. The plot of the "*Winter's Tale*"—apart altogether from the violation of the unities—especially the unity in time—*Perdita* growing up from an infant to a marriageable woman in the course of the play—the plot in this drama is altogether improbable: it is worse: it is feeble and even silly. Yet, *Florizel* and *Perdita* could not be wanted out of Shakspeare's characters. "*Cymbeline*" is the most confused of dramas. *Posthumus's* conduct is preposterous and impossible—*Jachimo* was ingenious, but it is a clumsy ingenuity, and very operose for the compassing his object: *Cymbeline* is a weak, uxorious prince, who gets himself into his manifold scrapes with some industry, as if he invited them—while he demeans himself in them with the utmost coolness and indifference: the unravelling of the plot is absurdly formal and ingenious:—and yet *Imogen* is one of the most beautiful of Shakspeare's creations—and the play itself allows us to project our minds into the past, and body for ourselves those early times of internuncios between Britain and Rome—of Roman armies on British soil—Rome's far-extending invasions and conquests.

It is a peculiarity of Shakspeare, that after pages perhaps of flat enough dialogue, and abortive, though laboured, efforts at ingenuity and wit, where often we lose the meaning in the verbiage and play of words, and we feel it is hardly worth while to endeavour to extricate the sense, there come some glorious passages, with which, perhaps, we have long been familiar, and which break upon us like the burst of sunshine through a cloud, passages which would redeem any amount of flat or stale writing, and any degree of unlikely incident and improbable invention. It is perhaps in those very places that such passages are found. They come upon us with some surprise, and with all the pleasure with which we would find stray children in a forest, or wandering on a trackless heath. It is like the greeting of an old friend in most unexpected circumstances, on familiar terms with far from equal associates.

Shakspeare is comparatively free from the blemishes which disfigure the dramatists of his age—but he is not altogether innocent in this respect. There are frequently passages which blur his compositions, and which we would wish far enough from such noble dramas. This however, as well as the remark about his plots, applies chiefly to his earlier comedies, and minor plays, not to his great dramas, written when his mind was mature, and his faculties were at their zenith.

As examples of Shakspeare's prodigality of invention, profuse beauty, originality and exquisiteness of imagery, and his incomparable language, we may refer to the dialogue between *Romeo* and *Juliet* in that love scene which, we suppose, could only be exemplified between Italian lovers, and under Italian skies:—or that pretty colloquy between *Lorenzo* and *Jessica*, beginning:

"The moon shines bright: in such a night as this," &c.,

interrupted by *Stephano* and *Launcelot*, only to be renewed with finer effect and more perfect beauty. As an instance of passion the most true to nature, the most impassioned, the most dignified, and the most beautiful in a mother, of noble rank—in her own right *Duchess of Brittany*, and mother of the rightful heir of *England's throne*—but a mother still, we refer to the interviews of *Constance* with *King Philip of France*, and with *Paaulph*, the